

## Soaked in sweet sounds

Published: Friday, January 13, 2006 at 3:15 a.m.

Whether it's tiny droplets dripping with a ting into a sink, the whoosh of rainfall soaking city streets or the thundering rush of rapid white rivers, the sounds of water are inherent in our experiences.

However, few have likely ever heard or seen water portrayed quite the way it will be Saturday night at Twichell Auditorium, when guest water percussionist David Cossin performs "Water Concerto for Water Percussion and Orchestra" with the Spartanburg Philharmonic Orchestra.

The concerto, written by Tan Dun, the Grammy- and Oscar-winning composer of the film score for "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," features various waterborne instruments he invented along with percussionist Christopher Lamb, played within and around a pair of transparent hemispherical basins filled with water.

"Water is just like music," Dun said via telephone from New York City. "Music is different from literature, it's absolutely a boundless language; water also is boundless."

Dun, who also composes music for other organic instruments created with paper and ceramics, works with Cossin and other cutting-edge musicians to invent and explore new ways to create and navigate sounds and music.

He is composing an opera, "The First Emperor," commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera and set to premiere in December.

Taking the mundane to a new place

Cossin, who appears along with famed cellist Yo-Yo Ma on "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," said he began working with water instruments about five or six years ago.

"In general, percussionists are searching for new and interesting sounds. We don't just have one instrument that we play," he said via cell phone as he drove through North Carolina toward Spartanburg with a car full of various percussive devices. "It's more of an outward focus on what's around you, trying to hear music in everything."



COURTESY OF THE MUSIC FOUNDATION OF SPARTANBURG

ABOVE: The Spartanburg Philharmonic Orchestra will feature water percussionist David Cossin in a Saturday performance. Cossin will perform "Water Concerto for Water Percussion and Orchestra." LEFT: Tan Dun, an Oscar- and Grammy- winning composer, performs water percussion. Dun wrote "Water Concerto" but will not perform with the orchestra.



He said utilizing water instrumentally puts everyday sounds people are familiar with into a musical context, adding that the task at times requires much mental malleability on the performer's part.

"The (water) instrument itself is unpredictable," he said. "I'm not exactly sure what sound is going to come out when I attempt to do something, so as far as that, I get a chance to improvise."

Dun agreed that water makes a rather impetuous performance instrument. "Technically, it's a very, very difficult experimental method," he said. "Sometimes we had to wear our raincoats to rehearse."

Dun's music comes to Spartanburg through a relationship he and Cossin have with new Spartanburg Philharmonic Orchestra maestra Sarah Ioannides. She has been part of Dun's innovative musical forays during the past six years and was his assistant conductor from 2000 to 2003.

Dun said he considers Ioannides a formidable force on the frontiers of musical innovation. Along with "David, the three of us have worked together for a long time discovering all kinds of new methods toward the new music," he said. "I think she is one of the best young musicians today, not just discovering the traditions, but also trying to bring the new traditions or invent new traditions for the audience."

Ioannides said Dun has been very influential and that Saturday night's performance is the Spartanburg Philharmonic Orchestra's "most cutting-edge work this season."

In addition to Cossin's guest appearance on "The Water Concerto," she said the philharmonic orchestra also performs Claude Debussy's "La Mer" and Benjamin Britten's "Four Sea Interludes," maintaining the evening's watery theme.

This story appeared in print on page D10

Copyright © 2012 GoUpstate.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.